

Parliament might perhaps accept fifteen. When he suggested that the pact should follow the removal of outstanding differences, the Ambassador replied that Poincaré desired it to be signed before the Genoa Conference. The more the project was discussed, the wider appeared the gulf.

A despatch from Baifour, Acting Foreign Secretary, on June 13, virtually ended the negotiations. "H.M.G. are still of opinion that no such defensive alliance should be concluded unless and until outstanding matters, more particularly, the economic reconstruction of Europe, peace with Turkey, and the internationalization of Tangier, have been satisfactorily settled. The prospect of an early settlement of such questions is, I regret to say, far from hopeful, largely owing to the attitude of the French Government; and in these circumstances no useful purpose would be served by pursuing further at present the conversations on the subject of the treaty of alliance." Poincaré coldly rejoined that France was absolutely indifferent as to whether there was a pact or not. As far as he could judge, it was better to leave things as they were, and to seek friendly agreement on the questions at issue. France knew that Great Britain would be found at her side if she or Belgium were again attacked.

VI. INVASION OF THE RUHR

In January, 1923, French and Belgian troops marched into the Ruhr on the plea that German reparations, which were paid in kind, were slightly in arrears. Italy sent a few engineers, but no troops. On the fall of the Lloyd George Coalition in November, 1922, Bonar Law formed a Conservative Ministry, retaining Curzon at the Foreign Office, but the change made no difference in British policy. It was the desire of all parties that Germany should recover her

economic prosperity, not only for the sake of our trade, but as a factor in the stabilization of Europe. The industrial boom caused by the voracious demands of war quickly collapsed, leaving us with high taxation and an army of unemployed. An eager desire for a return to normality was combined with a growing conviction that France was pressing Germany too hard. Owing to the withdrawal of the United States, England found herself in a minority on the Reparations Commission, where France could count on the support of Italy and Belgium. The epic conflict waged across the table by Sir John Bradbury, hitherto only known to those behind the scenes, became public pro-